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The Brain Brief - Vol. 4, No. 1

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Message from the Scientific Director

Dr. Rémi Quirion, OC, PhD, FRSC, CQ
Scientific Director

CIHR recently released the results of the September 2006 Operating Grants Competition. For the CIHR-INMHA community, the results were particularly discouraging as many excellent proposals could not be funded. I shared your disappointment and concern. To show our support, we decided to fund five grants for a six-month period despite the Institute's own reduced budget. Many of you have written to the government directly or have expressed your concerns to the media. We have seen a number of excellent opinion pieces or Letters to the Editor and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this campaign for more research funding.

While more support is needed for all areas of health research, I would also like to acknowledge the efforts directed toward more targeted initiatives. We will hopefully soon see the impact of stakeholder input concerning the establishment of the Canadian Mental Health Commission and other recommendations from report of the Standing Senate Committee on Mental Health and Addiction released last May.

There are some other interesting efforts underway to increase support for mental health research. The recent Roundtable on US-Canada Cooperation and Leadership in Mental Health (see Meetings and Events) at the Canadian Embassy in Washington has brought the business community to the table as a partner in what promises to become a global effort in support of mental health research.

In the meantime at CIHR-INMHA, we have to effectively plan for future research initiatives and how best to support them. Here, I would like to thank all of you who have provided feedback on our draft Strategic Plan 2006-2011. The document is currently being finalized and I look forward to sharing the final product with you shortly.

Our focus continues to be on partnership. We aim to leverage our resources and to identify opportunities for Canadian scientists both nationally and internationally. We have recently visited a number of NIH Institutes to discuss existing collaborations and to explore other areas of common interests. Interest in collaborating with CIHR-INMHA has grown tremendously since we have first started interacting with NIH. For us, it provides opportunities to participate in initiatives that would otherwise be impossible to implement given our limited resources. It also provides Canadian scientists with increased chances of receiving support, either from NIH or through joint funding. On-going joint Program Announcements are listed in the following section. We are currently exploring a number of new initiatives with NIH including joint consultations or workshops. We will keep you informed through our newsletter or special announcements. We will also soon feature an international section on our website.

I encourage you to help us identify additional partnership and networking opportunities, both nationally and internationally. Collaboration is key!

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Current and Ongoing Funding Opportunities

Joint Program Announcements with US National Institutes of Health (NIH):

Biology of Manual Therapies

This initiative is led by the National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and includes four additional NIH partners and the CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (CIHR-IMHA). The PA is active until 2009, soliciting grants on the regular NIH grant cycle timeline with three competitions per year.

Shared Neurobiology of Fragile X Syndrome and Autism

This PA was published in May 2005 and is a public-private partnership led by the National Institute of Mental Health. It includes two other NIH institutes (NINDS and NICHD), the Health Research Board of Ireland, Autism Speaks, the FRAXA Research Foundation and the CIHR Institute of Genetics (CIHR-IG). The Fragile X Foundation of Canada is a secondary partner to INMHA and will consider co-funding for Canadian projects on a case-per-case basis. The PA is active until 2008, soliciting grants on the regular NIH grant cycle timeline with three competitions per year.

Brain Disorders in the Developing World: Research Across the Lifespan - Joint PA

This Program Announcement was published in May and is a re-launch of the 2003 RFA led by the Fogarty International Centre (FIC). The PA is active for three years and is a partnership including 9 other NIH partners and Autism Speaks.

Finland-Germany-Canada Joint Initiative in Neuroethics

To be announced shortly, this joint funding initiative with the Academy of Finland and the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education will support bi-lateral or tri-lateral research collaborations in neuroethics.

!For further information on any international activities, please contact Astrid Eberhart at aerberhart@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

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External Funding Opportunities

NIH Program Announcement: Inhalant Abuse: Supporting Broad-Based Research Approaches

This PA was issued by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in December 2006. The goal is to encourage research on all aspects of inhalant abuse (i.e. epidemiology, prevention, treatment and service delivery). The initiative follows a consultation meeting held in November 2005 led by NIH with participation from INMHA and the CIHR Institutes of Aboriginal Peoples' Health (CIHR-IAPH) and Human Development, Child and Youth Health (CIHR-IHDCYH).

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Funding Announcements

Operating Grants - September 2006 Competition

- Hsiao-Huei Chen (University of Ottawa): *Control of sensory neuron differentiation and projection*
- Denise Henriques (York University): *Integrating and interpreting sensory information for motor learning*
- Rebecca McKinney (McGill University): *The role of dendritic spine motility and the function of heterogeneity in spine shape*
- Gillian O'Driscoll and colleagues (McGill University): *Stress-induced dopamine release in relatives of schizophrenic patients*
- Jeremy Seamans and colleagues (University of British Columbia): *Dopamine modulation of prefrontal network activity*

Mental Health in the Workplace

One application was supported through the "Delivering Evidence for Action" Team Grant Competition:

- Alain Marchand (Université de Montréal): *Developing better diagnosis, interventions and policies in occupational mental health: A multi-disciplinary approach*

Neuroethics Chair

Details on the outcome of this competition are available on the website:

- Judy Illes (Stanford University), George Mackie (University of British Columbia): *National core for integrated neuroethics in Canada (NCINC)*

Japan-Canada Joint Health Research Program

The results of CIHR's fourth joint competition with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science were announced in February. In total, four joint grants were made (out of 19 applications) including the two below from CIHR-INMHA. The full list of grants is available on the website.

- Edward Ruthazer (McGill University), Japanese collaborator: Nobuhiko Yamamoto: *Molecular and cellular mechanisms of activity-dependent circuit refinement - Transcriptional*
- Barry Sessle (University of Toronto), Japanese collaborator: Koichi Iwata, and colleagues: *A collaborative approach to clarify mechanisms of orofacial pain*

Canada-Finland Collaborative Program in Substance Abuse and Addictions

This is CIHR-INMHA's second joint program with the Academy of Finland (AF) to support collaborative research projects in substance abuse and addictions. The program, managed by AF, also includes participation from two Russian funding organizations. CIHR-INMHA will support three Canadian collaborative grants, one of which will be part of a Finnish-Canadian-Russian consortium:

- John Cunningham (University of Toronto), Finnish collaborators: Pekka Sulkunen (University of Helsinki), Anja Koski-Jännes (University of Tampere), Kari Poikolainen (Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies), Russian collaborator: Irina Petrozavodsk (St. Petersburg State University): *Theories of addiction and images of addictive behaviours*
- Christina Gianoulakis (McGill University), Finnish collaborators: Kalervo Kiianmaa (National Public Health Institute), Eero Castrén (University of Helsinki), Liisa Ahtee (University of Helsinki): *Brain opioidergic systems and neurobehaviour*
- Rachel Tyndale (University of Toronto), Finnish collaborator: Hannu Raunio (University of Kuopio): *Development of nicotine metabolism inhibitors*

Clinical Autoimmunity

This Team Grant competition was led by the Institute of Infection and Immunity (CIHR-III) in collaboration with CIHR-INMHA, CIHR-IAPH, CIHR-IMHA, the Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes (CIHR-INMD), and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. The list of grants is available on the CIHR website.

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Autism Genome Project

Researchers at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) and the Offord Centre for Child Studies have led an international consortium in the discovery of a previously unidentified chromosomal region containing autism-causing genes. Their findings, part of the largest genome scan ever attempted in autism research, were published in February online in *Nature Genetics*.

Working with 137 researchers from eight other countries, the scientists analyzed DNA from about 1,600 families worldwide to zero in on a special group of neurons and the genes affecting their development and function. All the scientists involved in the project are members of a first-of-its-kind autism genetics consortium called the Autism Genome Project (AGP). The AGP began in 2002 when researchers from around the world decided to come together and share their samples, data, and expertise to facilitate the identification of autism susceptibility genes. The first phase of the effort involved the assembly of the largest autism DNA collection ever and a genome linkage scan.

The Canadian team, led by Dr. Stephen Scherer of SickKids and Dr. Peter Szatmari of the Offord Centre for Child Studies, has played a lead role from the beginning. It was Dr. Scherer who first co-discovered the existence of common genetic variants in the general population that could be involved with autism and other common disorders. These copy number variations (CNVs) are what the AGP scientists were looking for in their DNA scans of autistic individuals.

Dr. Szatmari led the committee to decide the phenotypes to be used in analysis, and was instrumental in drafting the memorandum of agreement among the consortium members, who represent 50 different institutions. They include a dozen other Canadian scientists from five institutions and four provinces.

The AGP has now launched the second phase of this global research effort. A total of \$26.7 million CAD over the next three years is being invested for the second phase of the AGP. Funding is provided by public and private partners, including Genome Canada/Ontario Genomics Institute and CIHR. Other funding partners include Autism Speaks, the British Medical Research Council (MRC), the Health Research Board of Ireland (HRB), Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center (SARRC), the Hilibrand Foundation, the McLaughlin Centre for Molecular Medicine, IBM, The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, and SickKids Foundation. This unique combination of international, public and private partners funding a consortium of clinicians and scientists is unprecedented in the field of autism research.

The press releases on the *Nature Genetics* publication and the launch of the second phase are available on the SickKids website.

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Neuroethics Society aligns with International Network on Neuroethics

In January, the Neuroethics Society and CIHR-INMHA announced the alignment of the Society with the International Network on Neuroethics (INN). The INN was initiated by CIHR-INMHA in an effort to bring together individuals and organizations from around the world interested in promoting neuroethics. Launched at the 2006 Society for Neuroscience (SfN) Annual Meeting in Washington (DC), the INN was endorsed as a useful forum for exchange of information and a variety of joint endeavors. CIHR-INMHA hosted a second planning session at SfN in Atlanta in November 2006 where it was decided to explore a possible link to the newly established Neuroethics Society.

With the alignment now formalized, the INN will serve as the international arm of the Society with CIHR-INMHA as the coordinating body for the network and associated activities, in collaboration with other relevant organizations. The INN will operate through meetings with prospective funders around the world and initiatives will include the organization of workshops and symposia and the development of joint funding programs. The Society will promote international Neuroethics activity and help to distribute news about INN initiatives. An open forum meeting of the Network is planned for the next SfN meeting in San Diego, CA in November 2007. To be placed on the INN mailing list, please contact Astrid Eberhart at aerberhart@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

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2007 International Brain Bee Championship

The International Brain Bee (IBB) is a live Q & A competition that tests the neuroscience knowledge of high school students. Young men and women from all over North America compete to determine who is the "best brain" on a variety of neuroscience topics. Local competitions are held throughout the US and Canada, with the winners invited to the championship at the University of Maryland during Brain Awareness Week in March.

University of Toronto first place winner Carol Cui took fourth place in the IBB Championship at the Maryland in Baltimore on March 16 and 17. Carol joins the list of Canadian students who have performed extremely well in past competitions. In the eight year history of the IBB, three University of Toronto brain bee winners also won first place in the IBB. Last year's winner in the IBB was Toronto student Jong Park. Another Toronto student, Peter Lu took home second place in 2005.

The IBB is an attempt to motivate youth to learn about the brain, capture their imagination and inspire them to pursue careers in biomedical brain research. The IBB Champion receives \$3000, an all expense-paid trip for two to San Diego to attend the 2007 Society for Neuroscience Convention, an individual trophy, a traveling trophy for his/her high school, and an opportunity to work in the lab of a famous neuroscientist during the summer.

Information on the International Brain Bee and the 2005 Championship can be found at <http://web.sfn.org/baw/bee.cfm>. Details on the University of Toronto Brain Bee Program are available at http://www.utoronto.ca/neurosci/brain_bee_main.html.

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Meetings and Events

US-Canada Cooperation and Leadership in Mental Health

This Roundtable and reception were held on February 15 at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, hosted by Ambassador Michael Wilson. The meeting was organized and moderated by Bill Wilkerson, Co-Founder and CEO of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health. The guest list included over 100 scientists and business leaders from Canada and the US. The intent of the meeting was to engage Corporate Canada and Corporate America as strategic partners with science in fighting stigma and supporting research on mental illness.

A powerful advocate for mental health and engagement of business in support of scientific discovery and workplace health, Ambassador Michael Wilson set the stage for the meeting with some inspirational welcoming remarks. He acknowledged those initiatives already underway including the International Partnership for Mental Health Research (IPMHR) - an alliance that was founded by the Schizophrenia Society of Canada, the Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation and two US based organizations, the National Educational Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder and the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression (NARSAD), with support from NIMH and CIHR-INMHA.

Next followed short presentations by Thomas Insel, Director of the US National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and CIHR President Alan Bernstein, as well as Rémi Quirion and Institute Advisory Board Chair Tony Phillips. The CEO perspective was provided by Moya Green, President and Chief Executive Officer of Canada Post Corporation. Counting approximately 71,000 employees, the company is leading the way in this effort with a sponsorship program focused on mental health issues. The agenda also included a presentation of the results of the first ever US-Canada public opinion survey by Ipsos Reid on the "Meaning of Depression."

The snapshot presentations were followed by a dynamic Roundtable discussion including some passionate remarks from Congressman Patrick Kennedy. The event finished with a commitment to hold a follow-up meeting in Canada later this year. For further information, please see www.mentalhealthroundtable.ca/ or

contact Bill Wilkerson at bill.wilkerson@gwl.ca.

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Upcoming Events

Workplace Mental Health & Addiction: Research, Knowledge & Action

Vancouver, May 17-18, 2007

See December 2006 Brain Brief or www.carmha.ca/conferences/2007/workplace/. Contact: Dr. Joti Samra - (604) 291-5263, jsamra@sfu.ca.

First Annual Meeting of Canadian Association for Neuroscience / Fifth CIHR-INMHA Annual Meeting

Toronto, Ontario, May 22-25, 2007

As mentioned in the December 2006 Brain Brief, CIHR-INMHA will mark the fifth anniversary of its Annual Meeting by joining forces with CAN to host this landmark neuroscience event. The preliminary program for the CIHR-INMHA fifth anniversary meeting is now available on the CIHR-INMHA website at [Information on the CAN meeting is available on the CAN website: www.can-acn.org/](http://www.can-acn.org/).

First Canadian IBRO Neuroscience School: Fundamentals of Epilepsy

Toronto, Ontario, May 22-June 1, 2007

As reported in the December 2006 Brain Brief, the First Canadian IBRO Neuroscience School will be held in association with the CAN/CIHR-INMHA meeting. Further information is available on the IBRO website at <http://schools.ibro.info/>

Neuroethics Breakfast & Information Session

Toronto, Ontario, June 1, 2007

This information session will be held during the Canadian Bioethics Society Annual Meeting at the Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre Hotel (www.bioethics.ca/) from 7:45 - 8:45 am. The event is hosted by the Neuroethics Research Unit of the Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal, in collaboration with the Neuroethics Society (www.neuroethicssociety.org/). The session will provide information about Canadian neuroethics research, networks, collaborations, publications and other activities. For information, please contact Dr. Eric Racine at: neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca

Frontotemporal Dementia in ALS Second International Conference

London, Ontario, June 10-13, 2007

This event is sponsored by the ALS Society of Canada, the ALS Association, ALS Society of Windsor (Essex County) and The Michael Halls' Endowment. For information, please contact Ms. Rita Casciano at rita.casciano@lhsc.on.ca or (519) 663-3874.

Canadian College of Neuropsychopharmacology - 30th Annual Meeting

Banff, Alberta, June 15-18, 2007

Rémi Quirion will present at this year's CCNP Presidential Symposium: *The integration of neurology, psychiatry, and neuroscience in the 21st century*. For further information, please see www.ccnpc.ca/index.html.

The College of Problems on Drug Dependence - 69th Annual Meeting

Quebec City, June 16-21, 2007

The CPDD conference serves as a forum bringing together basic scientists and clinical investigators from

industry, academia, and government interested in the biochemical, behavioral, and public health aspects of drug dependence. For further information, please see www.cpdd.vcu.edu/.

2007 NIDA International Forum: Technological Innovations to Build International Research Capacity
Quebec City, June 15-16, 2007

CIHR-INMHA has been asked to participate in this CPDD satellite meeting sponsored by NIDA. For further information, please www.drugabuse.gov/ (then click on International Programs).

Annual Nanomedicine Conference
Waterloo, Ontario, June 20-21, 2007

The fifth Annual Nanomedicine conference will again be held in conjunction with the NRC/NSERC/CIHR Nanoforum (June 18-20). The list of sponsors includes the CIHR Institutes of Genetics (CIHR-IG), Cancer Research (CIHR-ICR), Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (CIHR-IMHA), and Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA), and the Canadian Federation of Biological Sciences (CFBS). The theme for the meeting is: Nanostructures and their Biomedical Applications. Details are available on the CIHR website. For further information, please contact Eric Marcotte at emarcotte@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

Impulse Control Disorders in Parkinson's Disease
Toronto, Ontario, July 12-13, 2007

This workshop is supported by The Movement Disorder Society, NIH, the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre and CIHR-INMHA. "Impulse Control Disorders" are disruptive behaviors such as gambling, compulsive shopping, or hypersexuality that occur rarely in people with Parkinson's disease. The goals of the workshop are to better define the features of this disorder, discuss what may be the causes of these behaviors, and address how to treat patients who have this problem. For further information, please see:
<http://www.movementdisorders.org/meetings/impulsecontrol07/supporters.php>

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CIHR-INMHA News

Honours for Rémi Quirion

Order of Canada:

The Institute Advisory Board members and CIHR-INMHA staff congratulate Rémi Quirion on his appointment to the Order of Canada. Conferred by the governor general, the Order of Canada recognizes outstanding achievement and service in various fields of human endeavour. It is our country's highest honour for lifetime achievement. CIHR-INMHA also congratulates all other award recipients, particularly those who have made contributions to health and science. For a complete list of appointees, please see:
<http://www.gg.ca/media/doc.asp?lang=e&DocID=4984>

Schizophrenia Society of Canada 2007 Pacesetter Award:

This special award was presented to Rémi Quirion for his significant contribution at reducing stigma around schizophrenia. He accepted the award at the Schizophrenia Society's 5th Annual Tribute Luncheon on March 8 in Toronto.

March 2007 IAB Meeting

London, Ontario, March 2-3, 2007

The biggest snow storm of the season didn't stop the most recent meeting of the IAB. Members braved long delays and cancellations but most found their way to London, Ontario. Key items for discussion were the CIHR-INMHA Strategic Plan 2006-2010, program evaluation and a session on Knowledge Translation. The agenda included a tour of the Robarts Research Institute followed by a reception and information session. Thanks to IAB member Ravi Menon for assisting with the local arrangements.

CIHR-INMHA Staff News

A special thank-you to Rocio Benalcazar for her administrative assistance to the CIHR-INMHA office in Montreal over the last three years. We wish Rocio good luck in her new position at the Douglas Hospital!

Request for News Items

Please let us know of any upcoming news-worthy research publications or other news, including external funding opportunities or special initiatives that may be of interest to our readers. Information should be forwarded to Astrid Eberhart at aeberhart@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.